

## Transcript: Perry Kerr

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*Today is Wednesday, April 20, 2011. My name is James Crabtree and today I'll be interviewing Mr. Perry Kerr. This interview is taking place by telephone. I'm at the General Land Office building in Austin, Texas and Mr. Kerr is at his home in Three Rivers, Texas. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to speak to us today. It's always an honor to speak to a veteran such as yourself. I always like to start off with this question. Maybe sir, tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went into the military.*

**Perry Kerr:** I was born in 1925. We lived in Baird, Texas. Times got to be very hard. The Depression came in and, man, we didn't have a job, and there's no money to be had. We kind of had it hard, hard living back in the late '20s and early '30s. But, the government helped us to buy gas and everything to go and find jobs and my dad found a job. 'Course I wasn't but about three years old when we moved to Three Rivers, but he found a job here driving a truck, hauling cotton from Three Rivers to Corpus Christi compress down there. Oh man, they had a time hauling them old '29, '30 model trucks. They'd leave the load sometime and have to reload it. Us kids, man, we had to go hungry sometimes. I remember \_ helping us get flour and milk, and sometimes we'd have gravy and bread three times a day and so glad to get it.

*Did you have many brothers and sisters?*

**Perry Kerr:** I sure did. I had two brothers and two sisters. My two brothers, they went into the Army. One of 'em went into the Army, one into the Marines in early '41.

*So before the war started?*

**Perry Kerr:** Before Pearl Harbor, yes.

*Were they both older than you?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes.

*And your sisters were younger?*

**Perry Kerr:** I had one sister older than I was, and then my younger sister was almost two years younger than I was. She went into the WACS. Three of us boys, and all of us were in the service.

*So four of the five children in your family ended up serving during the war?*

**Perry Kerr:** Right.

*That's great, sir.*

**Perry Kerr:** And not a one of us got a scratch. Three boys fought in wars and didn't get a scratch.

*I'm sure your parents were thankful for that.*

**Perry Kerr:** Oh, yeah, I figured Mom's and Dad's prayers were the reason that we didn't get shot up.

*Yes sir. So tell us then, do you remember where you were on Pearl Harbor Day?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes sir, I was in high school. That was in '41, and I was in high school. I was trying to get into the Canadian Air Force at that time. They would take you in at 15 and send you to school until you were 17 and then they would enter you into the flight training program. But Pearl Harbor come along and they wouldn't take anymore enlistments into the Canadian Air Force from the U.S.

*Do you remember how you learned about the attack on Pearl Harbor? Did you hear it on the radio or from family, or did you see it in the paper?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, we heard it on the radio.

*And at that point, do you think, even though you were still in high school, that you would be serving in the military soon?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, I knew I would. Patriotism was something else in those days, man. Everybody wanted to fall in and do their part, you know. We were kind of looking forward into doing our service time.

*So tell us then, when do you finally enter into the military? Is it right out of high school, after you graduate?*

**Perry Kerr:** I didn't graduate. They got me a year before I graduated, at the end of my junior year.

*Okay. And how old were you at that point?*

**Perry Kerr:** I was 17 when I enlisted.

*Seventeen. And so you got a draft notice?*

**Perry Kerr:** No, I never did.

*Oh, you signed up?*

**Perry Kerr:** I signed up and they called me in five days after I was 18 to enter into the aviation cadet program.

*Okay. What was it that attracted you to the Army Air Corps?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, I love to fly. I wanted to fly worse than anything else and they offered me a good chance.

*And so you were in Three Rivers. Was there a local recruiting office there or was it in Corpus Christi?*

**Perry Kerr:** It was in San Antonio.

*San Antonio.*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes sir.

*So you went and signed up. After you signed up, how long was it before you were actually on your way to basic training?*

**Perry Kerr:** About six months. They called me in five days after I was 18. That would've been about six months from the time that I first put my application in to join up. And I enlisted into the Air Corps Reserve.

*It sounds like you were eager and excited to get to training and get underway.*

**Perry Kerr:** I sure was. I was looking forward to that. They were very good to me.

*Where did they send you to first?*

**Perry Kerr:** I went to Wichita Falls for basic training. And from there, they sent me off to Oklahoma, to college up there, for, they call it a CTD course, College Training Detachment. Then, after four months, we came back to San Antonio and there I entered the cadet program.

*What were the other men like that were in the program with you? Were they all pretty much around your age and that sort of thing?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah, they were very close. Most of 'em just hadn't finished high school. Some of 'em even had a year of college or so.

*What are some memories that stand out to you the most during that time of going through training and everything?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, the spit and polish stood out the most. Boy, they would rack you bad and make you stand at attention. But I enjoyed that. That was great. They was trying to break us in to do the Army's world instead of ours.

*Had you ever flown before you went into the Army Air Corps?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, I had taken a flight or two in a small plane and I really did love it.

*So it was something you knew that you weren't going to be afraid of?*

**Perry Kerr:** That's right.

*So, what was it like the first time you got to go flying during training, Army Air Corps training?*

**Perry Kerr:** I loved that. They gave us eight hours. They wouldn't let us solo in college training. I just loved that. We went out nearly every day for oh, probably 45 minutes to an hour. They gave us eight hours of that and I just loved that.

*I know at some point you became a nose gunner, is that correct?*

**Perry Kerr:** That's right.

*How did that transition come about during your training?*

**Perry Kerr:** I was wanting to fly so bad that I fooled around and washed out. I was, I think, a little bit immature. Most of that college training was a little tough for an ol' boy that didn't even

finish high school. So, when I washed out, I went into armament training out in Denver, Colorado, and there, I studied bombs and rockets, not rockets, but bombs and cannons and bombing systems and all that.

*So you knew you wanted to stay with something that dealt with aircraft. How did you get assigned to being a nose gunner?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, I wasn't a nose gunner at that time. First, I first was a waist gunner, and the guy that took the nose turret was too tall to fit in that thing. He was from St. Louis and he was a tall boy and so he talked me into trading with him and I told him if the pilot okayed it, that'd be fine with me and that's how come I got in the nose turret.

*And did you train as a crew together?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, we sure did.

*I've done some other interviews and that's one thing I was always impressed by was that the crew trained together for quite a long period of time. So I imagine you really got to know those guys well.*

**Perry Kerr:** I sure did. We trained, took overseas training as a crew in Charleston, South Carolina. And they whipped us up into shape and we learned to work together and do the job that we were supposed to do. Everyone had an assigned job. I guess we did that pretty good.

*Tell us a little bit about your crewmates.*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, we were from all walks of life. I was, I think, maybe the youngest of the 10 men. One was from St. Louis; one from Troy, New York; one from Pennsylvania; one from Oklahoma, our navigator. Our pilot was from Washington, state of Washington. Our bombardier was from Tennessee. And, they were all a good group of guys. We, our bombardier wasn't too accurate, so we didn't get to take him overseas with us. When I got the nose turret, I got the job of dropping our bombs.

*So you didn't have a bombardier then, you did two roles?*

**Perry Kerr:** That's right.

*Tell us a little bit about that.*

**Perry Kerr:** Oh, it was a scary sometimes. You were the first guy through that flak that they were shootin' up at you. And, sometimes, it would cause you to ask the Lord to help you get through all that. And, sometimes it was a little scary, but you know, after you got back to the base, you just felt like, no sweat, we made it this time.

*When you would fly one of those missions and you'd be in the nose gun, was there a certain point that the pilot would tell you that you were approaching the target, and then you'd leave your position and go to the bombardier's position?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, I stayed up there. After we got off the ground, taking off on a mission, the first thing you'd do after you'd cleared the ground, was to get up in the turret. And you had to

help watch out for other aircraft as you were ascending because sometimes we'd have a thousand aircraft all trying to get into formation to fly that mission. And he would let us know that we were getting close to the IP. That was the initial point. And that's where we would straighten out and make a bomb run. And he'd let us know that we was getting close to it. My job was to see that the doors got open while we was on that straight run and get ready to drop. And we had bombardiers in the lead planes, the lead crew, and when he'd drop, we'd drop when he dropped.

*Okay. So you didn't have to worry at that point as much about using a bomb sight?*

**Perry Kerr:** No. I didn't have to do that.

*So it was a situation where you followed the lead plane and when they started dropping you'd open the doors and start dropping them as well?*

**Perry Kerr:** That is it. And they called the guy that dropped the bombs that way, they called him a "toggleer." He'd just toggle the switch and drop it'd go.

*I've not heard that before. So you were a toggleer?*

**Perry Kerr:** Toggleer.

*Tell us a little bit about the B-24 for folks that aren't familiar with it.*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, the B-24, I loved that aircraft. It was faster and carried more bombs farther than the B-17 did. Now the B-17 was a fine aircraft. It was the old flying fort. And they would take a good deal of punishment before they'd go down. But, they were just like we were, they died and got shot down just the same as the B-24s did. But the old B-24s, we spent about an hour less time on a target run than the B-17 fellows did. So it was a good ol' aircraft.

*How long would a normal mission last for you?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, anywhere from eight to 10 hours.

*Was there a particular time that you guys would fly? Would you leave in the mornings, or at night? Did it vary?*

**Perry Kerr:** Most of the, all of our flights were in the daytime. All of our bombing missions were in the daytime. We'd leave early morning, just soon as it'd get light enough to see the runway. Usually we'd be over the target by 10 or 11 eleven o'clock.

*Tell us, sir, about your memories of your first mission.*

**Perry Kerr:** My first mission was to Wilhelmshaven and we carried eight 1,000-pounders on that B-24. With the load of fuel that we had, we had to cut back on the bombs that we could carry. And we carried eight of those 1,000-pounders and dropped them on submarine pens and the dock facilities. We never did bomb any civilian targets. We hit railroads and military targets.

*What was going through your mind on that first mission when you were taking off? Were you afraid, were you excited?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, it was new to me. I wasn't exactly afraid. They did shoot at us, but on this particular mission, we had some cloud cover so they didn't shoot at us as much on some of the other missions. I don't remember being afraid on Wilhelmshaven. It was all new to me. If you can fly with a load of bombs on, that's sometimes a little scary.

*And were you flying out of Britain?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, we flew out of field north of London, about 60 miles north of London.

*And how often would you fly a mission? Was it pretty much every day, or every other day?*

**Perry Kerr:** We'd fly maximum of three days in a row. Each time it was to a different mission, different target.

*What was life like when you weren't flying? What was living there at the airfield, what would you do to kind of take your mind off the war and that sort of thing?*

**Perry Kerr:** Most of the time when you weren't flying a mission, you were flying a practice mission or you were going to class for something or other, maybe explain trying to evade, in case you got shot down. They'd pretty well give you some classes to go to if you weren't flying.

*So they'd keep you busy then?*

**Perry Kerr:** Right.

*What was your most memorable mission? Is there one that stands out the most?*

**Perry Kerr:** The last mission we made was to a town named Salzburg. We flew down to Salzburg and it became cloudy. I guess our superiors knew that the end of the war was near. That was in April 25<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>. And they let us know that if we didn't drop those bombs, we was to bring 'em back. They didn't want us dropping on civilian populations and all the collateral damage that it would do. So, we made a big circle over close to Regensburg, and one plane in our formation got shot down. By all the queer things, the name of it was the Black Cat. Had a big ol' black panther painted on the side of this B-24. And they went down. They had 12 men on board on it. It was a lead ship. In a \_ behind us, about fifty yards behind us. Flak hit him and knocked him down and only two men got out of it. I didn't get to see it from where I was sitting in the nose turret, but the tail guns and the waist guns, they saw it and they said it had exploded twice, that they could see, on the way down.

*Was there ever a time when your aircraft was struck?*

**Perry Kerr:** Never did. Never got a, never took a lick.

*How many missions did you fly in that plane?*

**Perry Kerr:** I flew 11 in it.

*That's pretty remarkable then isn't it? To have gone that many without ever getting . . .*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, it was. And we actually flew 12, but one of them we were flying way up close to Norway and they recalled us because of the weather. There again, they didn't want us

dropping close to the cities, you know, where innocent people lived. Especially in Norway. So they told us to bring the bombs back that time. They were getting short of bombs, the reason they wanted to bring 'em back. When we landed, we touched the top of a steel pole at the end of the runway and blew a main tire on the right hand side.

*It was a little scary?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah, it was. I happened to be watching when I saw that thing. I yelled, "Blowout on the right main!" And, boy, we hit the deck and held on, and made it okay. But we would put the pins back in the bombs, they were all safe, we knew that.

*So, how would that work then? You were talking about the pins. When you would take off, was there a certain point in the mission that you would arm the bombs?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes. We would pull the pins out of the nose fuse, or tail fuse. I think both of 'em had pins in 'em. Cotter pins is what it was. And they slipped through this fuse that had a little hole in there that would line up and put the pin in. And we'd pull that out. If we brought the bombs back, we'd put the pins back in 'em so they would be safe.

*When would you pull the pins? Was it right after take-off or as you got closer to the target?*

**Perry Kerr:** Out over the channel after we had taken off. Before we got up to altitude because you had to go in there without a oxygen mask on.

*Tell us a little bit about that too. I know from looking at a lot of the pictures and the old films, it seemed like being in one of the planes at altitude it was very cold. Was that right?*

**Perry Kerr:** Oh, it was. Those oxygen masks would drip, you know, from condensation. Your breath being warm and hittin' that cold air and it would form water and then it would drip out of your oxygen mask all over the front of your flying suit and it's just be a solid cake of ice on your flying suit.

*How cold do you think it was aboard the aircraft?*

**Perry Kerr:** Most of the times, where we'd bomb from, at 22,000 to 25, 000 feet, it was around 40 degrees below zero.

*Wow, that's something that I don't think most people ever experience. That type of cold.*

**Perry Kerr:** Those waist gunners, they had to stand up all this time. They didn't even have a seat back there to sit on. On some of the ol' airplanes, they didn't have even a window in that waist window. It was just a open window.

*How did you try to stay warm in those conditions? I know they wore a lot of leather and that sort of thing but was that enough?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, we had heated suits. They plugged into the electrical system, and you'd turn that thing up sometimes nearly as high as it'd go, and if you got it too high it would make you kinda sick at the stomach. Kinda just too much heat there around your stomach and you'd have to cut it back but, those heated suits, also your gloves. We wore three pair of gloves to keep our

hands from sticking to the metal on the guns. And we'd have those heated gloves to help us a whole lot there.

*You mentioned the guns, sir. Tell us a little bit about the weapon systems that you fired.*

**Perry Kerr:** The caliber 50s, they were, I had two of 'em in my nose turret, and they were firing around 650 rounds per minute. We had enough for about, I think we had about 1500 rounds in for those two guns, so we didn't have a lot of ammunition to waste.

*Yeah, you had to be disciplined, I guess, with your fire.*

**Perry Kerr:** You sure did. You tried to fire in bursts of about 14 rounds but you get excited and sometimes your finger just wouldn't come off that trigger fast enough.

*How often would you see enemy aircraft during your missions?*

**Perry Kerr:** In those 11 missions, we only saw one, a German jet coming in on us way down. I think that was on our Regensburg mission. But you know he got within range of us, and he came in on our tail position, and he didn't fire a shot at us. And I had two boys in the back. They was screaming at the top of their voice, and they didn't fire a shot at him either.

*Why do you think that was?*

**Perry Kerr:** I don't know. I think maybe either his guns jammed or, they didn't carry a lot of ammunition on those jet planes because they had to have room for fuel. He might have been out of ammunition.

*That had to have been something too though to see a jet. I know those were some of the first jets ever, were the German jets, late in World War II. Did you see it yourself or just the gunners in the back?*

**Perry Kerr:** I didn't see him. From the nose position, he came in on the tail end, and we were getting close to the target and I had to be, get ready to drop those bombs, so I didn't have a whole lot of time to look around.

*Tell us, sir, a little bit about England in terms of how you and your crewmates were treated by the British people while you were there.*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, from my point of view, they treated us very nice. They'd invite you in a lot of times for tea and crumpets they called it. That's cookies. They didn't call 'em cookies, they called 'em biscuits. But they'd serve hot tea, and they'd invite you in for tea and crumpets. They were very nice to us. I had no complaints there. They were very nice folks.

*How long, ultimately, did you end up spending in Britain? How long were you based there?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, I went there in London the last part of February. So we'll say from March 'til June the 19<sup>th</sup> when we, June the 13<sup>th</sup>, when we left England.

*So February of '45?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes.

*So you were there from February of '45 until sometime during the summer of '45.*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah, about the middle of June.

*So you were there in Britain then on V-E Day?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes.

*Tell us a little bit about your memories of that day.*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, we weren't scheduled to fly that morning and so, as luck would have it, some of us got to go to the pub for a few cool beers, and we learned about it through the English over there in the pub. And boy, we booted back to base right quick in case anything came up.

*Was that something that was a surprise to you, or at that point . . .?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, it was 'cause we had to fight just like it was going on, you know. As far as we were concerned, we weren't near to being through.

*Sure. How about news from home? Were you able to get letters and packages pretty regularly from family?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, we sure did, and they was good about delivering all that stuff. We'd get cookies and cakes and candies and things from our parents.

*That's great. I know, sir, at the beginning of the interview you mentioned you had two brothers and a sister that were also in the service. Were you able to correspond with them at all, or did you just hear about them through your family, through letters?*

**Perry Kerr:** No, we corresponded.

*And where were they during most of the war?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, my older brother was in the Battle of the Bulge, and he was an MP. So he didn't do a lot of the fightin'. He just more or less directed traffic and kind of kept peace among the troops. And then my younger brother, he was older than I was but younger than the older brother, he was in the Pacific. He made, he spent some of the war on Samoa, and then when he left there he went to Tarawa. They had to fight there. And then from there he went to one of the other islands. I forget now which one it was.

*And he was the one that was in the Marine Corps, is that right?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, he was the one that was in the Marine Corps.

*So you actually were able to receive letters from him in the Pacific while you were stationed in Britain?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes.

*That's great.*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, v-mail we called it. The little thing is photographed and drawn down smaller so it'd fit in this little envelope they had. Because they had so much mail, the services did, to take care of. They had to reduce it in size.

*It also had to be censored as well, is that right?*

**Perry Kerr:** That's right.

*To remove certain things so you wouldn't give away your location or missions or that sort of thing.*

**Perry Kerr:** Oh yeah. They had to censor everything you sent out, and they'd cut it out. I think they'd cut it out most of the time. They'd take it a paragraph or a sentence at a time and cut that out if they . . .

*Now did your family know where you were specifically or just kind of in general?*

**Perry Kerr:** No, they didn't know where we were. They mailed letters to us at an APO number, on a port of embarkation or port of something.

*But did your mom and dad kind of have an idea or figure out that you were in Britain or more or less know what you were doing in general?*

**Perry Kerr:** I guess they did. I never did write to 'em and tell 'em but somewhere along the way they figured it out.

*Yeah, yeah. During this time were you married or did you have a girlfriend back home?*

**Perry Kerr:** No, I had a girlfriend over in England.

*In England, okay.*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah, one of the English girlfriends. She was very near my age and a very nice girl.

*How did you meet her?*

**Perry Kerr:** I met her through visiting one of those little pubs. She was in there drinking a ginger beer, and I guess she was 17 at that time, and I was 19, so she wasn't too far from my age. And she said, "Perry, I never did tell you when you were over here that I was only 17." I said, "Well, I wasn't but 19." And she died here a few years ago. We corresponded even after the war. She married an Englishman and he died first, and she held on for several years, a number of years, and then she finally come down with something and died.

*That's great though that you were able to stay in touch all those years.*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah, and I still correspond around Christmastime with her son and daughter-in-law.

*Oh, that's great sir. So tell us then, after the war is over, how long was it before you were able to return back to the U.S.?*

**Perry Kerr:** We came back, let's see, the Germans quit on May the 15<sup>th</sup> or May 10<sup>th</sup> or somewhere along about then, and by June 13<sup>th</sup>, we left there. Of course, not everybody got to come back. Some of 'em were in the Army of Occupation, and they had to stay like six months or something like that.

*In your case, was it decided on a point system or because you were a crew, did you go back kind of on, I guess, like a crew point system?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, we were, well, we were coming back to the States to re-train to go to Japan, and whereas the crew, they were gonna bust us up and I was going to a place in, supposed to go to Alamogordo, New Mexico to re-train in B-29s. They lost my records and I didn't get to make that. Before long, when the war ended, and I stayed in about six more months to fulfill my obligation which was the duration of the war plus six months, and I got out.

*When you came back from England, did you fly your aircraft all the way back?*

**Perry Kerr:** We sure did.

*What was that flight like?*

**Perry Kerr:** Oh, it was, to me it was very uneventful. It was pretty lengthy but we made it. We went to, flew from Valley, Wales to Iceland and landed in Iceland, fueled up, and then from there we went back to, we flew all the way to Bradley Field, Connecticut, and that's where we left our ol' airplane. The name of the airplane was Earthquake McGoon.

*Where did that name come from?*

**Perry Kerr:** Out of the Al Capp funny papers.

*Was it picked by the pilot?*

**Perry Kerr:** No, well, usually the crew would vote on it, you know. They'd pick 'em out a name for the aircraft and then they'd all vote yea or nay, or think that was a good name.

*Did it have nose art on it? Did you paint that character on it?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes. Yeah, we had a big ol' round picture of Earthquake McGoon and Daisy Mae.

*Who was it that painted it?*

**Perry Kerr:** I don't know the fella's name but it wasn't a new aircraft when we got it. It had flown, I think, a total of something like 75 missions and never got shot down in all that time.

*And it already had the nose art on it?*

**Perry Kerr:** It already had the nose art on it.

*Okay, so the name had already been picked then before . . .*

**Perry Kerr:** That's right. We didn't have a choice.

*Okay, I thought maybe your crew had picked the name.*

**Perry Kerr:** We didn't even have a choice of the plane they gave us. They'd tell you the \_ crew use such and such airplane number so and so.

*When you made that long flight back across the Atlantic just like when you went over, did you fly, did your plane go by itself or was it in a big formation like a squadron?*

**Perry Kerr:** No, we flew by ourselves.

*So if anything had happened in terms of mechanical issues or otherwise, you were on your own out there.*

**Perry Kerr:** That's right. And we had polished that thing up. The pilot ordered us to clean it up and polish it and slick it up, and man, we had it shiny. It was so silver colored. A lot of 'em were still OD colored And we flew it, we passed seven airplanes on the way back to the States. Polishing it up made it fly faster.

*That's great. So you landed in Connecticut and that's the last you saw of that aircraft?*

**Perry Kerr:** That's it. They sent it to the scrap pile I guess from there.

*Then did you hop on a train and go back to Texas at that point?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes sir, sure did. That was in June. They give us a bunch of shipping orders and we landed at, or rode the train, to San Antonio.

*Tell us a little bit about what that was like, finally getting back home after the war was over.*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, I liked airplanes. I even wanted to go back in when the Korean War come on. It wasn't because of the war but I just wanted to get back in the service where I'd be close to the airplanes. I loved the smell, and I loved the duties and everything, and I was going to re-enlist. And a fella come by, from out the oilfields come by and wanted, he had heard that I was fixin' to go back in the Army, and he wanted me to go out and work for him for a day or two, and I told him I wasn't interested, I was about to go back to the Army. I was going that following Monday. And he asked me to go out and, "Well try it for two or three days and if you don't like it, you can go on back in the Army, and if you do, well, you can stay with us." And I just stayed with them and didn't go back in the Army. But I would've got in on that Korean deal probably flying B-29s.

*So you ended up going to work in the oil fields then?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes.

*What company did you work for?*

**Perry Kerr:** I worked for a company called \_. They owned 37,000-acre ranch country out here, and they had a bunch of, I guess 140 or 150 oil wells on it. Then they joined forces with Murphy Corporation. Murphy sells gas now at these Wal-Mart stores. Working for Murphy Corporation, they shipped me to Superior, Wisconsin, to work in a refinery up there. And I stayed up there, and my wife and I were married. She was pregnant, and I quit the company, and I said, well her

health meant more to me than working at that refinery. So I come in and went to work for Coastal States Gas Producing Company in two weeks. I was only off two weeks.

*How did that gentleman know, why was it he was trying to get you to come work for him? Did he know you previously?*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, yes, they did. I went to school with his kids back in the '40s, in early '40s, and he knew of me, and we's kinda like family. Little town not very big anyway, and they lived not too far from us.

*That was Three Rivers?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah, Three Rivers.

*Do you remember the day you actually got home from the war, what that was like? Getting to see your mom and dad again?*

**Perry Kerr:** Oh, it was like heaven I guess you could say. Man, it sure was nice to be home and have the folks there. And they were so happy to have us home. We all made it.

*Did you come back on train or by bus?*

**Perry Kerr:** By bus.

*And they knew when you were coming into town so they were there to meet you?*

**Perry Kerr:** I don't recall. That doesn't ring a bell but I'm sure they knew I was coming and met me there 'cause all they had was just one little ol' Ford pickup, and ol' tires in the back so you couldn't, tires were rationed during the war and you couldn't get tires unless the ration board approved it, and dad would patch those ol' tires up and put boots in 'em, and they'd go jumping off down the road. But he'd find a way.

*And with the rest of your siblings, when was it they all were able to finally get back home? Was it around the same timeframe?*

**Perry Kerr:** They got home before I did. The one in the Marines, he hadn't been home in four years. He was over there a long time. We had a big time together. I was so glad to see him, and none of us got wounded or anything. We had to celebrate a little bit, yeah.

*Absolutely. It's just amazing that, you know, four of you went and served and no one was wounded or hurt in any way. That's a true blessing that was the case.*

**Perry Kerr:** The Army gave me everything they paid me for. I had no complaints with them and they, I guess, had none with me. I got a honorable discharge.

*That's great. So now you're residing in Three Rivers which is the town that you were born in?*

**Perry Kerr:** No, I was born in Baird, Texas, in Callahan County.

*That's right, you mentioned that. But you've lived in Three Rivers since you were, what, three?*

**Perry Kerr:** Since 1929, yeah. I was three years old at the time we moved here. I was born in '25, and we moved here before I was four.

*I was wondering, sir, have you had a chance to fly a B-24 or see a B-24 since you got out of the service?*

**Perry Kerr:** I sure have. It cost my kids about \$300 for me to take that ride but I rode in the B-24 by the name of All American. They rebuilt that thing from scratch up, re-skinned it and everything, and I got a ride in that, and it sure did sound good in there.

*Did it bring back a lot of memories?*

**Perry Kerr:** Oh, yeah. I got to crawl up to the nose and look in that turret where I flew one of 'em from.

*Was it pretty much the way you remembered it?*

**Perry Kerr:** Yes, it sure was. Yeah, all those sounds and that familiar smell in the aircraft.

*That's something.*

**Perry Kerr:** It made me want to fly in another one.

*Sure. That's really great that your children were able to find that and set that up for you.*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah, they surprised me, I think it was on my birthday. I went over to Houston, somewhere over there, and got that flight. Man, it sure was nice. We stayed up about 45 minutes I guess.

*Wow, that's really something.*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah.

*That is neat. Well, sir, I really appreciate you taking the time today to tell us a little bit about your story. It means a lot for us to be able to record this.*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, I appreciate you letting us do this. I'm sorry if I talked too much.

*No sir, this is great. It's the type of interviews that we like. I want to thank you too on behalf of Commissioner Patterson and everybody here at the Land Office. We all really greatly appreciate your service to our nation.*

**Perry Kerr:** Well, you guys are doin' a great job.

*Well, thank you.*

**Perry Kerr:** Thank you so much for all you're doing.

*Like I mentioned before, we're going to be sending you in a few weeks copies of this interview on CDs as well as a nice letter and certificate from Commissioner Patterson. And then also, if you have any pictures or anything that you want to share with us, we can make copies of it and add it to your file.*

**Perry Kerr:** Okay.

*We'd love to make copies.*

**Perry Kerr:** Yeah, I can do that.

*They say a picture's worth a thousand words so we try to always get some pictures if we can.*

**Perry Kerr:** I'll send you a picture of the ol' Earthquake McGoon.

*That'd be great. We'd love to see that. Well, sir, again, thank you very much. It's been an honor today to talk to you, and we'll be in touch again soon.*

**Perry Kerr:** Okay, James. I sure do thank you for allowing me to do all this.

*Sir, the honor's ours. Thank you. Take care.*

**Perry Kerr:** Okay, yes sir.

*All right, bye bye.*

**Perry Kerr:** Bye bye.